

PAUL MANAFORT WASN'T THE "CAMPAIGN BOSS" (YET) DURING THE JUNE 9 MEETING

Someday soon I'll be done reviewing the June 9 meeting materials. But as I'm revising my limited hangout post on it, I keep finding details I want to pull out.

When Don Jr told Rob Goldstone on June 7, 2016 who would attend the June 9 meeting, he said it'd be "Paul Manafort (campaign boss) my brother in law and me."

Now, it is true that Trump had named Manafort campaign chairman on May 19, as it became clear the reason he was ostensibly hired – to managed a contested convention – would not be necessary in the light of Trump sealing his win. That set off a month of in-fighting between Manafort and Lewandowski, ultimately leading to Lewandowski's firing – with the very active input of Trump's children – on June 20.

I find that interesting for two reasons. First, Roger Stone and Sam Nunberg had a role in making Manafort's case publicly, though neither was associated with the campaign anymore. Mueller has reportedly shown some interest in meetings that took place during this period. In other words, the process by which Manafort (temporarily) won the battle for Trump's affection may be an investigative interest.

The detail is also interesting because that's how Don Jr (implausibly) explains his enthusiastic response to Goldstone's offer of information that would incriminate Hillary: "if it's what you say I love it especially if it's later in the summer." Don Jr explained that he was busy ousting Lewandowski at the time, which is why they didn't want dirt in June, but instead later in summer, when it came out.

Q. And in your response it says "If it's what you say, I love it, especially later in the summer." Specifically what did you love about it?

A . As I said in my statement, it was a colloquial term used to say, hey, great, thank you. I didn't want to deal with anything right now. We had other stuff we had to worry about, namely a potential contested convention. We were in the process of replacing Corey Lewandowski, who was the campaign manager, with Paul Manafort. There was a lot of stuff on our plate.

On top of being totally unconvincing, Don Jr's response is inconsistent with his response to Goldstone, which treated Manafort as the boss already.

Steve Bannon has suggested that the June 9 meeting happened because Don Jr was vying to impress his dad even as Jared assumed a greater role in the campaign. But I think at least possible—particularly given the way the Trump team tried to downplay Manafort's role in the meeting—that the meeting happened because Manafort was vying for power with Corey Lewandowski.